



SAN BERNARDINO SHOOTING: County looks to analyze security after attacks

By [JOE NELSON](#)

2016-05-23 16:47:55



The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors today will consider hiring two companies to assess security at hundreds of county buildings following the Dec. 2 terrorist attack at the Inland Regional Center.

A bidding process began Feb. 12 in a search for security consultants to work with the county, and March 18 the county received bids from six. The county's Project Management Division is recommending the county enter into three-year contracts with Irvine-based TRC Engineers Inc. and Los Angeles-based Guidepost Solutions LLC beginning June 1 and ending May 31, 2019, according to a staff report prepared for county supervisors.

If supervisors approve the contracts, the consultants would provide on-call services. Each company would receive no more than \$500,000.

On Dec. 2, county environmental health specialist Syed Rizwan Farook, 28, and his wife, Tashfeen Malik, 29, stormed the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino and, armed with assault-style rifles, fatally shot 14 people, 13 of them Farook's colleagues from the Environmental Health Services Division who were attending a training seminar in a rented conference room at the center, which is not a county facility.

Farook and Malik, both of Redlands, were killed in a shootout with police hours after the attack. The FBI declared the attack an act of terrorism – the deadliest on U.S. soil since 9/11.

A task force formed in the aftermath of the shooting established the parameters on what work the security consultants would do and the process in which they would be selected.

The task force is composed of officials from six county departments, including the Sheriff's Department and the county's real estate services, project management, risk management, information services and facilities management divisions.

Security at county facilities has weighed heavily on the minds of employees since Dec. 2, and the county already has taken steps to make facilities more secure, mostly in the form of adding card key-only access to many offices that didn't have it and adding security personnel where appropriate, county spokesman David Wert said in an email.

"Those were relatively inexpensive measures that could be completed quickly. For the more expensive items, the county wanted to wait for expert assessment," Wert said in his email Monday. He said the county owns or leases more than 500 buildings encompassing 12 million square feet.

The scope of work the consultants would be tasked with, according to the proposed contracts, include assessing the security of building perimeters, interiors and parking lots.

The consultants also would assess security of vehicle, employee and visitor access to county facilities; video surveillance systems; building alarm systems; emergency communications systems; and lock and key control,

according to the proposed contracts.

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Another claim filed against San Bernardino County on behalf of Dec. 2 victim

By Joe Nelson, The Sun

Monday, May 23, 2016



The state's largest workers' compensation insurer is seeking more than \$53,000 from San Bernardino County on behalf of a man killed in the [Dec. 2 terrorist attack](#) at the Inland Regional Center.

On Friday, the State Compensation Insurance Fund filed a claim seeking \$43,439.81 in expenses and \$10,000 in damages on behalf of [Larry Daniel Kaufman](#), one of the 14 people killed in the mass shooting.

Kaufman, 42, of Rialto was a job coach at the IRC, where he worked at the coffee cart and helped developmentally disabled persons develop job and life skills.

County spokesman David Wert said Monday that County Counsel has not yet talked to attorneys from the state organization, and specifics regarding the claim were unclear.

Kaufman's boyfriend, Ryan Reyes, said the claim was filed on behalf of one of Kaufman's dependants, whom Reyes declined to identify. He said Kaufman had no children, and Reyes did not have any more information regarding the claim.

"I don't really know anything about it," Reyes said.

Gina Simons, spokeswoman for the State Compensation Insurance Fund, said she could not discuss specifics of the case, but did say dependants are not exclusive to children and spouses and can extend to parents or other individuals, even those who are not blood relatives.

Shortly before 11 a.m. Dec. 2, county health inspector Syed Rizwan Farook, 28, and his wife, [Tashfeen Malik](#), 29, stormed the Inland Regional Center and, armed with assault rifles, fatally shot 14 people and wounded 22 others in what the FBI declared the [deadliest terrorist strike on U.S. soil since 9/11](#).

Farook and Malik of Redlands were both radicalized Muslims who had been planning mass casualty attacks for years, according to the government.

Kaufman was the only slain victim who was not a county employee. The others were Farook's colleagues in the county environmental health services division who were attending a training seminar in a rented conference room at the center.

Friday's claim was the eighth filed against the county in connection with the Dec. 2 attack. In January, three relatives of shooting victim Sierra Clayborn [filed claims](#) seeking more than \$200 million in damages — each family member asking for \$68 million.

On Dec. 22, Renee Wetzel, of Lake Arrowhead [filed four claims](#) against the county, seeking a total of \$58 million in damages. She is the widow of county supervising environmental health specialist Michael Wetzel.

The county rejected all seven claims Feb. 1, and no lawsuits have been filed to date, Wert said. He said the deadline to file lawsuits in those cases is six months from the date the claims were rejected, which is Aug. 1.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20160523/another-claim-filed-against-san-bernardino-county-on-behalf-of-dec-2-victim>

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By [Shea Johnson](#)[Print Page](#)

May 23, 2016 5:12PM

County could decide next month on raves' future

SAN BERNARDINO — A proposal that would end electronic dance shows at the San Manuel Amphitheater is expected to come before San Bernardino County Supervisors on June 14, according to an aide for Supervisor Janice Rutherford.

Rutherford's spokesman Scott Vanhorne said Monday that Rutherford was looking to bring forth an item to terminate the county's 2013 agreement with Live Nation Worldwide Inc. next month although it was initially believed the proposal would go in front of the dais Tuesday.

However, Vanhorne said Tuesday's agenda was essentially too full.

Rutherford is leading an effort to end the agreement that allowed Live Nation to hold four rave-style events per year at the amphitheater and extend the hours of operation for such events from 11 p.m. to 2 a.m., saying it has grown into a nuisance for the area surrounding the amphitheater and other nearby residents.

"The impacts on the community have become absolutely intolerable," she said during a supervisors' meeting April 5.

During that meeting, several Devore residents spoke out against the events, criticizing the noise and traffic and expressing concerns for public safety, while Rutherford suggested the sentiment could be echoed by dozens or hundreds more. She also referenced two overdose deaths that have occurred at the site since the introduction three years ago of the Nocturnal Wonderland and Beyond Wonderland raves put on by Insomniac Events, a division of Live Nation.

Messages left with Insomniac and Live Nation on Monday were not immediately returned.

The amended contract agreement passed 3-2 on Jan. 29, 2013, according to county documents, and included "event termination provisions based on recurrent noise violations and nuisance behavior associated with event goers."

Rutherford, who along with then-Supervisor Gary Ovitt voted down the amendment, asked the county's legal counsel last month how supervisors could "activate" the cancellation provision amid purported contract violations. At that time, the county's legal counsel said the county would partner with the parks department to investigate issues raised by residents.

If those issues were corroborated, a notice would be sent to Live Nation.

Vanhorne said that prior to 2013's agreement, the 11 p.m. event curfew had been the standard since 1992, adding that while the two deaths were "tragic," the vendor's inability to mitigate noise issues was the ultimate driver behind Rutherford's push.

"Really, where it cuts down to is, that 2 in the morning is too late to have loud music playing at that venue," he said, "and it's unfair to residents of Devore who for years have been able to not have noise after 11 p.m."

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<http://www.vvdailypress.com/article/20160523/NEWS/160529886>

[Print Page](#)

Safety Over Revenue: The Blasphemy in Banning Raves

Despite issues of high arrest rates, inadequate security and drug overdoses, the bans on raves proposed within San Bernardino County and passed in Los Angeles County fail to address the urgent and high-priority issue of safety.

By **Megan Monges** - May 24, 2016



Illustration by Christina Carlson

Since the 1980s, raves have offered teenagers and young adults an alternative place to expand their minds through electronic dance music, dancing, and recreational drug use. Although many attendees will note that a large majority of those attending these events are sober, many guests, especially young adults, will consume MDMA, methamphetamines, and other psychoactive drugs while at raves. Over the last three years, four people have died of drug overdoses while attending the Live Nation Events, Beyond Wonderland and Nocturnal Wonderland held at the San Manuel Amphitheater in San Bernardino County. Citizens within San Bernardino have pushed officials since 2013 to restrict the amount of these events taking place within county borders, citing increasing

drug use, hospital visits, and deaths. A similar measure to ban raves outright was overturned in Los Angeles County after the deaths of two teenage girls at the Hard Summer event at the Pomona fairgrounds in August 2015. It is the county and event promoter's responsibility to ensure the safety of attendees, but when safety comes at the expense of losing out on a multi-million dollar contract, things become a bit messier for city officials. The security of those attending these events should be county officials' main concern, not a loss of revenue.

Nocturnal Wonderland and Beyond Wonderland are two of the largest raves in the country, with Nocturnal Wonderland attracting over 85,000 people (over three times the undergraduate population of UCSD). Boasting artists like Afrojack, David Guetta, and Calvin Harris, attendees will pay upwards of \$200 for a single weekend of fun. Citizens living near the amphitheatre have complained about the presence of the raves since San Bernardino County and Live Nation reached a deal in 2013. Excessive noise that shakes their windows, disturbs their animals and the frequent urination and defecation of their properties by rave goers are frequent complaints. San Bernardino County Supervisor Janice Rutherford is behind the proposed ban and noted that that the residents are overwhelmed by the amount of noise into late hours of the night, and that it is "impeding their lives."

Beyond just the noise complaints from neighbors, community members have called for county officials implement tighter security measures at the events. At the Beyond Wonderland two day event in March 2015, over 300 people were arrested for offenses including public intoxication, trespassing, and the possession of Ecstasy for sale. Thirty-two people were taken to nearby hospitals, and a twenty-two year old University of California, Irvine student died of an Ecstasy overdose. Since 2006, there have been at least twenty-three confirmed drug related deaths nationwide of people attending raves. Within that number, eleven were in Southern California, with seven occurring in LA county properties and four happening on San Bernardino owned property. Obviously, something needs to be changed.

Although security has been amped up among the festival sites, the lack of a standard of safety across all raves happening within county or state borders is a serious problem. A minimum age limit is set on a case by case basis, not a universal requirement. Until 2013 when a fifteen year old died of an overdose at the Electric Daisy Carnival event at the LA

Coliseum, sixteen and over was the common age requirement for most raves. Despite the presence of drug sniffing dogs and safe surrender bins at rave entrances, people are still doing drugs at an alarming rate while at these events.

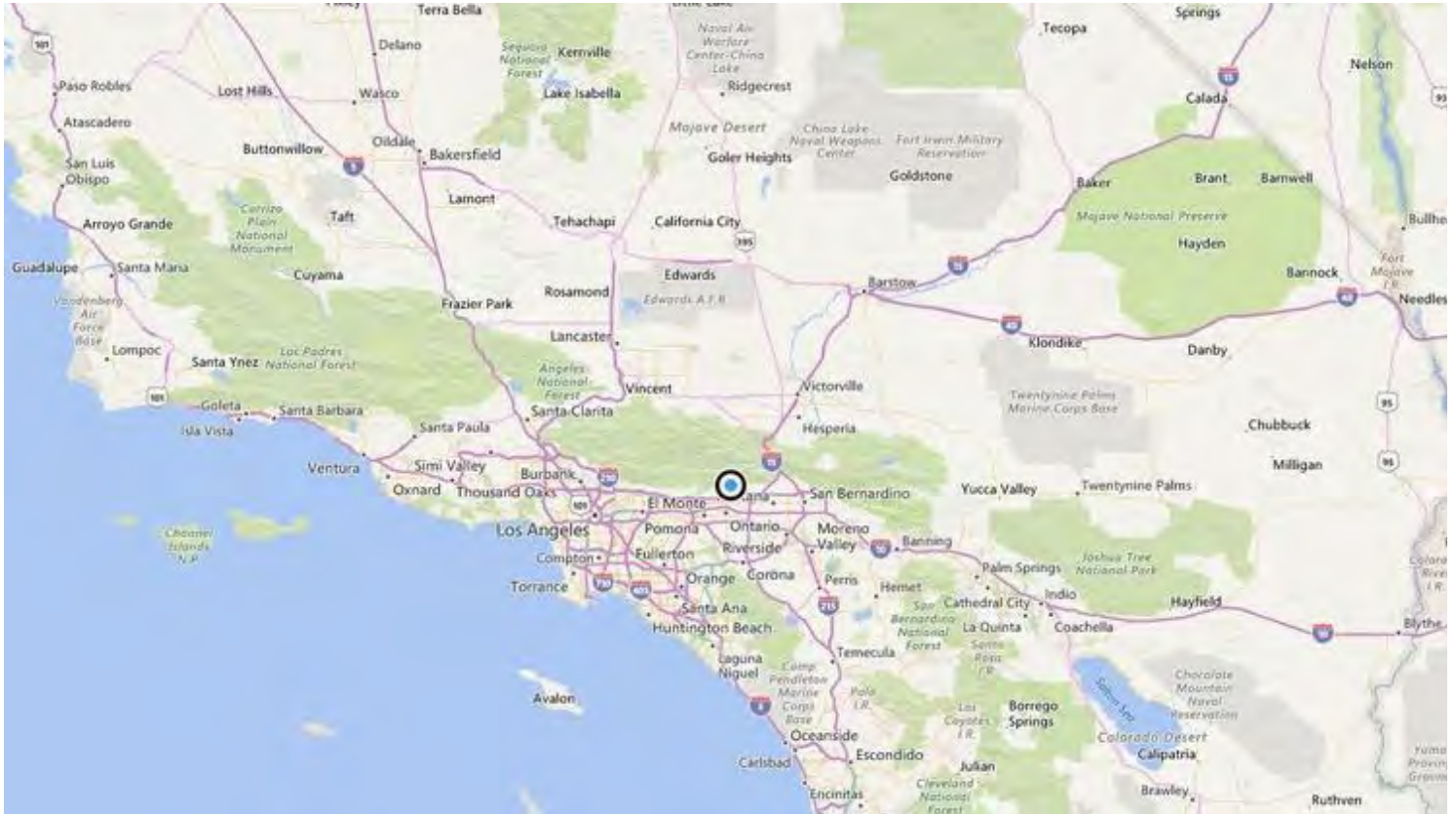
The question is a matter between the county's responsibility to ensure the safety of those attending events on public property and the revenue they receive from hosting the same events. Live Nation, and their subsidiary company, Insomniac Events are the largest rave promoters in the United States, leading a billion dollar business. Although the exact details of their contracts with LA county and San Bernardino county are unknown, it is estimated that both benefit substantially from their deals to host raves on county property. If Janice Rutherford and San Bernardino citizens get their way, the county looks to lose out on a considerable amount of money.

Banning raves from San Bernardino county will not solve the drug problem and high arrest rates associated with these events. Banning raves from one county will just ensure that promoters will take their events to other cities and counties across the country, bringing the same problems. With larger counties proposing ordinances that prohibit raves, promoters will be forced to take their events into smaller and more desolate areas. This is not a win or lose situation. The safety of those attending these events should be of the utmost importance; this should take priority over city revenue or noise complaints. It is only when safety and security measures are rethought of and put in place that raves will be beneficial for the county, community, and ravers. After all, raves were built upon the principles of P.L.U.R- Peace, Love, Unity, and Respect.

Megan Monges

LOCAL / L.A. Now

Earthquake: 3.5 quake strikes near San Antonio Heights, Calif.



A map showing the location of the epicenter of Monday evening's quake near San Antonio Heights, Calif.. (Bing Maps)

By **Quakebot**

MAY 23, 2016, 7:32 PM

A

shallow magnitude 3.5 earthquake was reported Monday evening one mile from San Antonio Heights, Calif., according to the U.S. Geological Survey. The temblor occurred at 7:28 p.m. Pacific time at a depth of 6.2 miles.

According to the USGS, the epicenter was four miles from Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., four miles from Upland, and six miles from Ontario.

In the last 10 days, there have been no earthquakes of magnitude 3.0 or greater centered nearby.

This information comes from the USGS Earthquake Notification Service, and this post was created by an algorithm written by the author.



DECISION 2016: Clinton, Sanders are about to put Inland Empire on the political map

By [JEFF HORSEMAN](#)

2016-05-23 13:51:33



For a while, it seemed the only way Inland residents would see a presidential candidate was by looking skyward to see their planes as they flew to the California coast for rallies and fundraisers.

But on Tuesday, May 24, the Inland Empire will host Democratic presidential contenders Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders. Clinton will appear at a rally at 5:30 p.m. at UC Riverside.

Just two miles away, Sanders will hold a rally at 2 p.m. at Riverside Municipal Auditorium. At 7, he is expected to rally supporters at the National Orange Show Events Center in San Bernardino.

It's a heaping dose of attention for a region of more than 4 million that usually gets overlooked as a place to campaign in the race for the White House, especially with a primary that comes well after the races for the Republican and Democratic nominations are all but over.

"What it means for us is that we get more attention and that we have a chance to have a say in the kind of policies that get tested out here," said Rep. Mark Takano, D-Riverside.

Takano, a Clinton supporter, said he suggested to Clinton that she visit Riverside when they talked at a dinner a few weeks ago. "She said 'Well, tell Huma (Abedin, an aide to Clinton),' " Takano added.

Neither President Barack Obama nor Republican challenger Mitt Romney visited the Inland Empire in the 2012 presidential campaign, although Obama has repeatedly trekked to the Coachella Valley to golf and meet with world leaders. And Obama and the first lady flew to San Bernardino last December to meet with families who lost loved ones in the Dec. 2 terror attack.

With California's June 7 primary being crucial to Sanders' long shot hopes, the Vermont senator has barnstormed the state in hopes of upsetting Clinton's path to the nomination.

Clinton holds a sizable lead in delegates over Sanders. But while her campaign doesn't need to win California -- Democratic delegates are awarded proportionally, meaning the losing candidate still picks up delegates -- a loss would be embarrassing to her and provide a major boost to Sanders as Clinton tries to focus on beating presumptive Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump.

Mindful of the need to wage a two-front battle against Trump and Sanders, Clinton is campaigning in California this week, visiting Los Angeles and Commerce before heading Inland on Tuesday. Her husband, former President Bill Clinton, is holding rallies for his wife, including one that took place in Pomona last Saturday.

A Field Poll released in April showed Clinton leading Sanders 47 to 41 percent, a much smaller lead than she enjoyed over Sanders in January. An ABC7-Southern California News Group poll released Monday showed Clinton leading Sanders by 18 percentage points among likely voters.

'WIN EVERY VOTE'

Clinton and Sanders are visiting an Inland Empire that, while more Republican than other parts of California, still offers plenty of Democratic votes in the form of a large Latino population and a blue-collar workforce which is relatively less educated compared to the rest of the state.

Takano, who was first elected in 2012, said the Inland Empire is “changing for the worse for Republicans.”

“There’s been a fundamental shift in the Inland Empire in terms of an awareness of which political party represents their interests and aspirations,” he said. “The (Inland) people are about aspirations and hope and they are diverse and I would say that the Democratic Party represents diversity. It certainly respects diversity.”

Takano said he will not be at the UCR rally since the House of Representatives is in session.

Both candidates have campaigned on a message of economic opportunity and reducing income inequality, something that could especially resonate in an Inland Empire that took longer than other areas to recover from the Great Recession.

The GOP has a slight voter registration advantage in Riverside County -- 341,203 voters to 324,045 for Democrats, according to the county Registrar of Voters . But Democrats hold a 5 percentage-point edge in San Bernardino County and statewide, the percentage of Republican-registered voters has dropped in recent years.

The fact that both candidates are visiting “suggests the race will be a close one,” said Shaun Bowler, a UC Riverside political science professor. “We aren’t an area where Democrats usually find all that many votes. But in a close contest all votes count and so we are seeing campaign events to try and win every vote.”

The Inland Empire “does not carry as much weight as Los Angeles County or the Bay Area, but Riverside and San Bernardino Counties account for about 8 percent of statewide Democratic registration,” said Jack Pitney, a professor of politics at Claremont McKenna College. “In a close contest, that’s a significant number.”

The Inland’s Latino population -- 50.5 percent of all residents in San Bernardino County and 46.6 percent of Riverside County residents, according to 2014 census figures -- is a draw for Clinton, who has a strong following among Latinos, said Jennifer Walsh, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Azusa Pacific University.

Sanders does especially well among college students, and Riverside is home to a number of colleges and universities, Walsh said.

Pitney said Clinton’s popularity among Latinos gives her an edge in the Inland Empire.

“But Sanders is surging among younger voters, and if he can get a large number of no-party-preference voters to take part in the Democratic primary, he will be very competitive,” Pitney said.

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DECISION 2016: Security will be tight for Clinton, Sanders events

By [MARK MUCKENFUSS](#)

2016-05-23 23:08:22



With two presidential candidates blowing through the city today, Riverside will see heightened security.

Bernie Sanders will be making a 2 p.m. appearance at the Riverside Municipal Auditorium. And, at 5:30, Hillary Clinton will speak at UC Riverside.

Sanders will also be that National Orange Show Events Center in San Bernardino at 7 p.m.

Riverside Police spokesman Mike Barney said his agency, along with California Highway Patrol and the U.S. Secret Service, will be cooperating to provide security for both events. Barney said UC police would also assist with security for Clinton's visit.

UCR spokesman James Grant said police from other UC campuses were being called in to assist, but did not have numbers on personnel.

No road closures are expected for the UCR event, but some streets will be closed in downtown Riverside for Sanders' appearance:

- Lime Street, between Sixth Street and Mission Inn Avenue: Closed to vehicle and pedestrian traffic 5 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
- Lemon Street, between Sixth Street and Mission Inn Avenue: Closed to vehicle traffic 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

DECISION 2016: [Closures for candidates' visits](#)

While the Secret Service is the lead agency for such events, Rob Savage, special agent in charge of the Los Angeles field office, said it relies on assistance.

"We are dependent on our state and local partners," Savage said. "All of those agencies impacted in the jurisdiction all support us," he said.

Neither Savage nor Barney would say how many officers might be involved in the two operations. Barney said he did not know what the cost to the city would be.

He said his officers would not be involved in security checks for people attending the event.

Sanders' website advises those attending to arrive early

"For security reasons, please do not bring bags and limit what you bring to small, personal items like keys and cellphones," his website says. "Weapons, sharp objects, chairs and signs or banners will not be allowed through security."

UCR spokesman Grant said he did not have details on security measures there, but added that he expected

those attending should expect the kind of checks they would encounter at any major public event.

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Politics

Analysis California's seeing a surge in voter registration — but the impact on the June election isn't clear



Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders gets a round of applause during a rally at Lincoln Park in East Los Angeles. (Mark Boster / Los Angeles Times)

By **Cathleen Decker**

MAY 24, 2016, 12:05 AM

California, the state with a well-earned reputation for disinterest in things political, has been overrun by a vast and historic burst of new voters.

And those voters will storm the polling places, rescuing the state from its usual self-flagellation over poor turnout and determining the winner of the contested June 7 presidential primary.

Or it hasn't. And they won't.

The answers rely on two circumstances that were unclear as Monday's deadline for registering to vote

came and went. One is how voters are counted in this state. The other is whether those new voters, however large their cohort is, will defy tradition to show up.

Most state and local officials and voting experts believe that there has been a surge in new registrants. It's just that it's hard to prove it beyond a doubt. The numbers tend to confuse rather than clarify.

According to data from the office of Secretary of State Alex Padilla, hundreds of thousands of registrations occurred between mid-March and mid-May.

They show an increase of more than 220,000 Democrats, or a nearly 3-percentage-point boost in their numbers, which hit 7.7 million. Republican numbers rose by nearly 70,000, for a 1.45-percentage-point increase and a total of 4.8 million. And the ranks of non-partisan voters — which have been the fastest-growing in California for years now — actually fell by 20,000 to total 4.1 million, a drop of half a percentage point. None of that appears hugely significant.

But statistics kept by voting specialist Paul Mitchell suggest a far larger group has jumped into the pool.

By his count, more than 2 million fresh voters will be included by the time the tallies from Monday's deadline are completed. According to counts made by his firm, Political Data Inc., there already has been a boost of 218% in Democratic registration, of 78% in Republican registration, and 74% in nonpartisan registrations.

Registrations among Latinos are up 123%, he said. Sign-ups among those 24 and younger are up 87% and those 25 to 30 are up 188%. The latter two categories would suggest a boost for Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders.

The timing, however, is important. The figures compare the 2012 pre-primary period with 2016's. In 2012, there was no Democratic primary because President Obama was seeking reelection. And since competition begets registration, disinterest in 2012 may have set up a more positive view of today's registration.

Indeed, a comparison of official registration numbers shows the contested 2008 race had a bigger impact. Among Democrats, for example, more than 535,000 voters joined up in the four years before that election; the current gain over four years ago is just over 94,000.

Additionally, the numbers Mitchell's firm collects include all manner of registrations, whether they come from voters who have never cast a ballot or those changing their party or address. So his figures probably overstate the actual number of new voters.

To know definitively how many new voters have registered, California would need to calculate the

number of new registrants who have never taken part in an election, how many voters have been taken off the rolls for failing to vote and how the political alliances of the new voters square with the old voters. (A probable Sanders voter replacing another probable Sanders voter would be a net gain of zero.)

The state doesn't know that.

Mitchell calls the current numbers “an historic surge in pre-primary registration — more akin to what we would have expected before a general election.” Purges of inactive voters, which are being applied by counties according to their own processes, serve to greatly underestimate the number of new voters in the secretary of state's tabulations, he said.

Orange County recently dropped 108,000 voters who had not cast ballots in the last four state elections and had not replied to inquiries about their status, he said. So an increase of more than 100,000 new voters would leave the county basically stable under the state's calculations.

“You have this real uneven implementation happening in huge waves at local counties,” Mitchell said.

Darry Sragow, a longtime Democratic strategist and publisher of the nonpartisan California Target Book, which assesses state races, took a more cautious view of California's new voters.

“The net numbers that are being reported by the secretary of state do not shed light on what's going on under the surface,” he said. “How many of the new registrants are first-time registrants and how do they differ from the significant number of voters who are being purged from the rolls?”

As for the impact, he said, it's not clear if voters are registering to support a candidate or to vote against one — say, presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump.

“To suggest a surge is only because of passion for Sanders — and there is passion — and overlook the fact that the notion of a Trump presidency is an awful thought to a lot of Democrats misses the point,” he said.

County officials confirm heightened interest this year.

By Friday, Los Angeles County had seen 196,000 new registrants, according to Dean Logan, the registrar-recorder/county clerk. Another 141,000 people had either changed their address or political party. Over the weekend, another 40,000 people registered, in both categories combined.

“That's pretty phenomenal, more in comparison with what we've seen in the lead-up to a presidential general election,” Logan said.

The attraction of millennials to registering as independents — and the continued Democratic race —

seem to have driven much of the action in the Los Angeles area. Both independents and Democrats can vote in the Democratic primary; only Republicans can take part in that party's primary.

“The fact that Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton, regardless of delegates, still seem to be socking it out until the end — that continues to be a motivating impact,” Logan said.

Among the new registrants, more than 61% were under the age of 20. The second largest group of registrants in Los Angeles County was aged 30 to 39.

Though that suggests a Sanders vote, all manner of political entities are sponsoring voter registration drives this season, and the voters being drawn in could be more diverse than age alone suggests.

Latino organizations have sought to register voters in order to cast ballots against Trump. Candidates have their own voter drives.

Environmental activist Tom Steyer gave \$688,000 to local and state Democratic groups for registration efforts in Los Angeles and seven other counties. He also gave \$250,000 to the state Democratic Party for its registration programs. (Clinton is the Democratic favorite in pre-primary polls, while Sanders has the edge among independents).

At a recent Los Angeles forum on voting sponsored by the Public Policy Institute of California, Secretary of State Padilla said that, as elsewhere, the 2016 race is central to big registration numbers. That is particularly true in California, where [the U.S. Senate race has been humdrum](#), and there is only one statewide measure on the June ballot.

“Obviously the presidential is driving a lot of energy, excitement and attention,” he said. The increase in registration online and in person-to-person contacts are “all signs of a public that’s paying attention and getting ready to turn out to vote.”

But will they?

Voting specialist Mitchell noted that so far early voting has not been dominated by the new voters. Percentage-wise, non-Latinos and voters over 55 have predominated.

It could be that young voters will catch up by June 7, or it could be that the act of registering was far more exciting than the reality of voting.

“It could be that there’s a little rush of cathartic exercise in registering and not a rush to actually pick among [the 34 Senate candidates](#) and ballot measures and I-don’t-know-who-my-congressman-is,” Mitchell said. “The voting isn’t as exciting as that moment when you see something on TV, horrific or

exciting, and get your laptop and register to vote.”

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[California saw surge of new Democrats in first three months of 2016](#)

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Loma Linda City Council goes sixth year without an election

Lack of candidates in sharp contrast to first election in 1970 when 15 campaigned

By Sandra Emerson, Redlands Daily Facts

Saturday, May 21, 2016



LOMA LINDA >> At a time of heightened political interest nationwide, the city of Loma Linda is an apparent outlier. For the third time in six years, the City Council has scrapped the municipal election.

That's because no one has stepped up to run against the incumbent City Council members since [2010](#).

Three council seats were up for election this year, but incumbents Rhodes Rigsby, Ovidiu Popescu and John Lenart were the only candidates by the end of the nomination period, prompting the council to cancel the race. The council also

canceled elections [in 2012](#) and [2014](#).

"There aren't any really pressing issues that sometimes brings candidates out," said Popescu, who won his seat in 2008. "Sometimes people are very upset about one thing or another, and I think folks are pretty content with the way the city's run."

Popescu, along with Rigsby, elected in 2006 and appointed mayor in 2010, and Lenart, appointed in 2012, will be sworn in for new four-year terms on June 14.

The council canceled the 2016 election at its March 22 meeting. Except for elected officials and city staff, the council chambers were empty.

The city saved \$10,000 by canceling the election, but the move means residents do not get an opportunity to hold their representatives accountable, said Renée Van Vechten, associate professor in the political science department at the University of Redlands.

"Officials may be performing their jobs satisfactorily, even admirably," she said, "but democracy demands that voters provide their periodic approval or disapproval at the ballot box."

Historical first

In Loma Linda, voters elect five City Council members. The council then appoints the mayor and mayor pro tem.

The City Council canceled its election for the first time in the city's history in 2012, voting to appoint the only three candidates running for three seats.

Among them were incumbents Popescu and Rigsby. Lenart, the only candidate to fill the vacancy left by retiring Councilman Stan Brauer, also was appointed.

In 2014, Councilmen Ron Dailey and Phill Dupper ran unopposed, so the council agreed to cancel the election and appoint the incumbents.

“I guess there’s just nobody in town interested in getting involved,” said Floyd Petersen, a former Loma Linda mayor who was on the council from 1989 to 2010.

The March 22 council meeting may prove his point.

The council lightly joked about conducting the meeting in front of an empty council chambers. Rigsby asked if the “zero members of the public” wanted to speak during public comment.

After canceling the election, the council members began discussing giving themselves raises for the first time in 10 years.

“I would have thought this would have brought a crowd out tonight,” Dailey said.

The council narrowly approved the raises on May 10.

Voter apathy or satisfaction?

The lack of council candidates in recent years stands in stark contrast to the city’s first election in 1970. That year, 15 candidates campaigned for five open council seats.

During the last election, in June 2010, five candidates campaigned for two seats. Dailey was re-elected and Dupper was elected.

About 29.7 percent of the city’s registered voters cast ballots.

Dismally low voter turnout is a chronic problem for cities and counties, Van Vechten said, in part because local politics do not get the same media coverage as national politics. Unless something goes drastically wrong, or there’s an interesting character or a hot-button issue, there’s often little that drives voters to the polls, she said.

“Usually people need to feel their votes will matter or they won’t participate.”

But the fact that council members run unopposed does not necessarily mean that people are not interested in the outcome, Van Vechten added.

“It could mean that council is doing its job, or that there’s limited interest in running for those offices, or scant awareness about candidates, or little understanding about how local politics works,” she said. “When things seem to be working and no one has sounded any alarms about wrongdoing, citizens tend to feel secure and to assume that their votes really won’t matter or aren’t needed. In fact, local elections are where their voices tend to count most, because so few people actually cast ballots. A handful of votes are often enough to turn an election.”

Little controversy

Petersen, the former mayor, said there just aren’t any big issues going on in town — unlike past elections

when Loma Linda battled over development and growth.

“If you saw some major housing project coming into town then you’d start seeing activity again,” Petersen said.

Development was a focal point during the 2006 and 2008 elections, which Popescu remembers well.

“We had some pretty heated battles in 2006 and 2008 over development, and I was very much in the midst of it all,” Popescu said.

In 2006, voters approved Measure V, a slow-growth initiative. Popescu, a proponent of the measure, was elected in 2008. Voters proved their interest in 2008, when they voted to elect Popescu, a proponent of Measure V, and booted then-Mayor Robert Christman, who was critical of the measure.

That’s not to say Loma Linda has not seen any development activity in recent years.

Today, Loma Linda University Health breaks ground on its new hospital building at Barton Road and Anderson Street.

Construction is under way at the Veterans Administration medical clinic, the Ronald McDonald House expansion and on other commercial projects.

This month, the City Council approved the construction of an Extended Stay Hotel near the Holiday Inn Express & Suites.

New businesses have opened up in town, including Holiday Inn on Redlands Boulevard and a controversial McDonald’s restaurant on Barton Road.

‘If it ain’t broke’

A canceled election is a shame for residents who do not understand the potential for mischief when they’re not paying attention, Van Vechten said.

The city of Bell is a tragic reminder of what happens when voter apathy combines with criminal intent, she said.

“Loma Linda may not be in that category, but elections serve a basic function that shouldn’t be underestimated,” she said. “If it doesn’t make sense to hold an election where it won’t change the outcome, perhaps more needs to be done to advertise the open seats to encourage competition and raise awareness about the council’s work.”

Elections allow people to mandate political change or approve the status quo, and people are energized to vote when they believe they’ll contribute to changes that matter to them, Van Vechten said.

Take the current presidential election, for example. Immigration, health care, minimum wage laws: These national and state issues are driving political debate and perceived as important in part because they’re talked about everywhere, Van Vechten said.

“Typical local government issues such as park renovations or rezoning don’t have the same appeal, don’t get regular news coverage, and often don’t reach residents who might care about them — so it shouldn’t be surprising that Loma Linda residents aren’t paying close attention to their City Council elections,” she said. “The prevailing attitude is, ‘if it ain’t broke, ain’t gonna fix it.’”

Popescu said the City Council gets along and the city is doing well financially.

“We’re one of the few cities that have managed to actually add to our reserves all throughout the recession, so our finances are fairly strong,” Popescu said. “We haven’t had any labor issues or any major issues for that matter, so I think as a result there’s just a nice tranquil quietness. How long that is going to last nobody knows.”

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/government-and-politics/20160521/loma-linda-city-council-goes-sixth-year-without-an-election>

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DA Finds Fatal Officer-Involved Shooting in Needles Justified

Posted: Monday, May 23, 2016 9:43 am

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. - The San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office has completed its review of the fatal officer-involved shooting of Jackie Brand, 50, of Highland, by San Bernardino County Sheriff's Deputy Travis Vessells on July 15, 2015.

Under the facts, circumstances and the applicable law, the actions of Deputy Vessells were legally justified.

The report of the written case evaluation is available at www.sbcountyda.org by selecting Press Releases under the Newsroom tab at the top of the home page.



Tuesday, May 24, 2016

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Posted [May 23, 2016 - 7:42pm](#) | Updated [May 23, 2016 - 8:45pm](#)

Baker gets its first traffic signal



A work crew installs the first traffic light in Baker, Cal. on Monday, May, 23, 2016. The owner of Baker Travel Plaza spent four years trying to install the signal because it is cheaper than a traffic mitigation fee being charged by San Bernardino County. Jeff Scheid/Las Vegas Review-Journal Follow @jlscheid

By ART MARROQUIN
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Baker is best known as the gateway to Death Valley, touting the world’s tallest thermometer, a handful of gas stations and the tasty gyros served at The Mad Greek restaurant.

Now, the popular pit stop between Las Vegas and Los Angeles can boast its first traffic signal. A switch was unceremoniously flipped at noon Monday, in front of the Baker Travel Plaza on the north end of town.

“This makes Baker a grown-up town,” said Clark Bryner, president of Baker’s Community Services District.

Almost.

For now, motorists will encounter only flashing red lights when they roll off the southbound Interstate 15 onto Baker Boulevard. San Bernardino Public Works officials said they hope to

install the necessary parts within the next two weeks to have a fully functioning signal where the main drag meets Caltrans Avenue.

"I thought something looked different," John Gonzalez of Upland said while fueling his car.

With help from the new signal, Ravi Grewal said he expects to see a 10 percent to 15 percent jump in business at his Baker Travel Plaza, a 10,000-square-foot oasis with a gas station, a convenience store and five fast-food restaurants.

"Most of the people have to stop here, and the customers will have everything they need right here," said Grewal, who paid about \$250,000 to install the traffic signal as a condition to get his business permit — roughly half of what San Bernardino County wanted to charge him.

The long journey to get Baker's first stoplight started shortly after Grewal opened his rest stop four years ago. A contractor was hired, then promptly fired for not getting the work done.

Several other companies were offered the job but turned down the chance to be a part of local history.

"Nobody wants to come out here because it's too far from everything," Baker Travel Plaza manager Nono Khosa said.

Khosa and Grewal finally came across Northstar Electric Inc. of Las Vegas, which agreed last year to install the light poles, signal heads and necessary wiring. Northstar's crew spent most of Monday morning testing the lights and making final adjustments to the fixtures.

"It's so far and remote, so getting material and equipment out here was a challenge and the work hours were crazy," said Omid Moattar, Northstar Electric's vice president of operations.

"But it's a job," Moattar said. "And we got it done."

Almost immediately after the signal started flashing red lights on Tuesday, vehicles backed up along the I-15 offramp to Baker Boulevard. On average, 7,829 vehicles exit here daily, according to San Bernardino County's Public Works Department.

"Lots of times you see car after car, especially during busy holiday weekends," said Le Hayes, the former general manager of Baker's Community Services Department. "Now you have a red light that will stop everyone in their tracks," Hayes said. "I'm afraid there's going to be some pretty major accidents."

A new sign was installed to warn drivers that a signal is coming up. Cameras mounted on top of the poles will help trigger the lights.

"I'm really happy we finally have this signal," Khosa said. "But I don't think people will stop here to take pictures like they do with the thermometer."

Contact Art Marroquin at amarroquin@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0336. Find [@AMarroquin_LV](#) on Twitter.

DAN WALTERS MAY 21, 2016 1:59 PM

Jerry Brown hopes to leave on high note, but fears downturn

HIGHLIGHTS

Governor reveals concerns about how he will leave

Budget looms as the greatest threat to his legacy

He shuns tax reform, pins hopes on a small reserve



Brown's history lesson: 'Bye bye, Jerry? Not if I can help it.' 01:02



1 of 2



BY DAN WALTERS
dwalters@sacbee.com

Obliquely and perhaps unwittingly, Jerry Brown has acknowledged that as his remarkable political career nears an end, he's concerned with how history will remember him.

OPINION

While unveiling a revised state budget on May 13, and five days later in a speech to business leaders, Brown referred to his hopes of leaving on a positive note.

As he described his new budget, Brown ticked off errors that his three immediate gubernatorial predecessors – Republicans Pete Wilson and Arnold Schwarzenegger and Democrat Gray Davis – had made that either undermined their popularity or, in Davis' case, led to his recall.

Each, he said, ended his governorship on a sour note – as did Brown's first governorship in 1983, by the way.

"Bye-bye Jerry?" he added, "Not if I can help it."

Brown leaves no doubt that he perceives the greatest threat to his legacy to be a volatile state budget that's very sensitive to the "zigzags" of the economic cycle, compounded by its very lopsided dependence on income taxes paid by the top 1 percent of taxpayers.

He repeatedly warned that the state is overdue for a recession, and should avoid big new spending commitments, saying that even a moderate downturn could cost the state \$55 billion in lost revenue over three years.

"To manage this budget is like riding a tiger," he told reporters at the budget session and later the business leaders, twice citing a recent Moody's Investor Services report that California is 19th among the 20 most populous states in its ability to cope with recession.

Although Brown's description of the chronic fiscal dilemma is dead on, he also displayed another attitude that marks his second stint as governor – an unwillingness to shoulder the difficult task of fixing it.

If, as he says, the underlying factor is a dangerous dependence on how well a handful of Californians are doing in their investments, the solution to that volatility and uncertainty would be to reduce that dependence and make the revenue stream more predictable.

But Brown has gone the other way, making the state even more erratically dependent on taxing the rich by sponsoring a temporary increase in their taxes in 2012, one that voters will be asked this year to extend for 12 more years.

Although he says he's noncommittal on the extension, Brown gave its proponents some ammunition by warning that without it, the state faces future budget deficits. And from a political standpoint, he says, "the best tax is one that 99 percent of the voters don't pay."

Moreover, Brown has shunned even trying to overhaul the tax system, citing the high likelihood that it would fail. He relies, instead, on what he describes as "a very small rainy-day fund" to cushion a downturn's impact.

Even were it to reach its legal maximum (currently \$12 billion), the fund would cover only a fifth of the revenue shortfall Brown says a mild recession would cause – a conundrum that the Moody's analysis cites.

As Sen. Bob Hertzberg, D-Los Angeles, who's been seeking traction for tax reform, so far unsuccessfully, observed after Brown's budget release: "We need a stable, growing tax base, not one that will fall off a cliff when the next recession comes, (and) until this outdated tax system is fixed, we won't be able to deliver real and sustainable progress for Californians."

That's quite true, and Brown knows it. But he's not willing to spend political capital to make it happen. Hoping to depart before the economic ax falls, as he semi-jokingly told the business leaders, is not exactly a profile in political courage.

Dan Walters: 916-321-1195, dwalters@sacbee.com, @WaltersBee

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By CA Lottery

10:56 A.M.

JOHN MYERS

Gov. Brown turns in signatures on parole ballot measure

Gov. Jerry Brown, still awaiting word on the legality of his plan to revamp the state's parole laws, nonetheless submitted petition signatures on Friday to earn the measure a spot on the Nov. 8 ballot.





Dana Williamson
@DanaWilliamson2

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Heading to counties with nearly a million sigs for
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10:34 AM - 20 May 2016

20 29

Brown's ballot initiative [remains under review by the California Supreme Court](#) , after a Sacramento judge ruled that Atty. Gen. Kamala Harris had erred by approving last-minute changes in its wording. If Brown loses that case, the initiative would be barred from the fall statewide ballot.

The initiative, [unveiled in late January](#) , would allow early release for some prison inmates who are serving sentences for nonviolent felonies and who earn credits for education and other programs. It would also allow judges the discretion to keep some juveniles from being tried as adults.

Elections officials now must seek to verify the signatures collected by Brown's campaign team, a process in which petition circulators were paid as much as \$5 per signature. By law, the initiative needs 585,407 valid signatures.

In a speech to business leaders on Wednesday, the governor called the initiative “a system of incentives” for some prisoners to focus on their rehabilitation.

“I think it's pretty reasonable,” Brown told the group.

But some law enforcement officers and district attorneys are poised to oppose the initiative.

“The governor longs for a return to the ‘bad old days’ of his first term that began in 1974, when parole boards freed inmates who had served extremely short sentences,” wrote George Hofstetter, president of the Assn. of Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs, in a recent online critique.

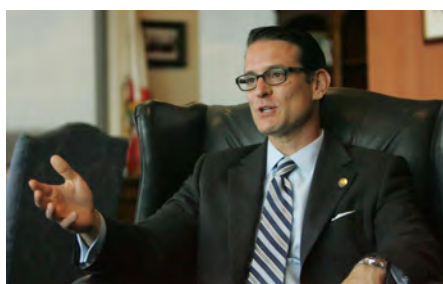
Brown's initiative is likely one of the very last proposals to seek a spot on the ballot, [a list that could total as many as 18 propositions by the time the final signatures are verified by elections officials](#) . Secretary of State Alex Padilla has until June 30 to certify the final list of ballot measures.



BEAUMONT PROBE: How the Public Integrity Unit built its corruption case

By [BRIAN ROKOS](#)

2016-05-23 20:07:27



After laying out documents from hundreds of boxes seized from Beaumont City Hall and other locations during raids in April 2015, members of the Riverside County District Attorney's Office's Public Integrity Unit began the task of poring over the papers, looking for evidence of corruption.

The documents, delivered to the district attorney's Riverside office in rented trucks, were spread among tables in three rooms.

"Then we were faced with this overwhelming logistical nightmare of going through all these documents, and sometimes it has been described as the proverbial needle in the haystack," District Attorney Mike Hestrin said. "There's no magic machine.

"The crime dramas on TV, everyone's always punching into a keyboard and up pops the answer. That's not how it works," he said. "You've got (so many) bankers boxes to go through. You know the answer is in one of them, but you gotta go through them page by page."

Hestrin on Monday described the Public Integrity Unit's actions that resulted in 94 felony charges being filed against seven former top city officials in Beaumont – although because the case is ongoing, he wouldn't get into specifics about the evidence.

Most of the charges allege embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds totaling \$43 million. None of the defendants has entered a plea.

'CORRUPTION IS HUMAN NATURE'

Public Integrity, with five investigators, is one of several fraud units in the district attorney's Special Prosecutions Section. Others include computer crimes, workers' compensation, auto insurance, welfare, consumer and real estate.

"Corruption is human nature," Hestrin said. "It's a fact of life that exists. Where it exists and where we find it, we're going to prosecute it."

One member of the Public Integrity Unit is assigned to the 6-year-old Inland Regional Corruption Task Force, which assisted in the Beaumont investigation. The other member agencies are the San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office, the FBI and the IRS.

"It's a priority for me," Hestrin said. "We're the only game in town as far as public integrity. The sheriff doesn't have it. The local police departments don't have this function. To me it's an absolutely core, essential function of the District Attorney's Office. ... The people who elected me into this position expect me and this office to do that job."

Hestrin vowed to protect the unit even if looming county budget cuts affect his office.

"You can't do this just a little bit. The cases are potentially massive. If you have a case like Beaumont, if you

have two investigators, you're never going to get it done. Never."

'STEP AWAY FROM YOUR COMPUTERS'

The Beaumont probe began after local activists Judy Bingham and Libi Uremovic presented evidence to DA investigators in August 2013, while Paul Zellerbach was district attorney. Zellerbach was defeated in the 2014 election by Hestrin.

Several weeks after he was sworn in on Jan. 5, 2015, Hestrin said, a "private citizen" whom he declined to identify met with about a half dozen investigators armed with possible evidence of wrongdoing in Beaumont, and the office ramped up its efforts.

Still, that evidence, Hestrin said, was not enough to establish probable cause that a crime had occurred – the standard for obtaining a search or arrest warrant. The Public Integrity Unit investigators then sought out, and found, enough evidence to get search warrants. Hestrin would not say in what form that information was obtained.

With that in hand, investigators in April 2015 served warrants on City Hall, the Beaumont office of Urban Logic Consultants, the Palm Desert home of then-City Manager Alan Kapanicas and a Temecula residence. (Three of Urban Logic's principals working as Beaumont contractors – former Economic Development Director David William Dillon, former Public Works Director Deepak Moorjani and former Planning Director Ernest Alois Egger – were among those charged.)

Hestrin estimated that 30 investigators and other personnel took part in the raids.

"They announce themselves and say, 'Everyone please step away from your computers and stop typing,'" Hestrin said.

"It's traumatic for the workers there. I feel bad for the workers because these are regular folks doing their job. ... But at the end of the day, we're there to get evidence," the district attorney said.

The documents proved helpful in determining that crimes occurred in Beaumont, said Hestrin, who declined to discuss the evidence.

The investigators worked nights and weekends to gain an understanding of the case, he said.

NOT MORENO VALLEY

The arrests of seven former Beaumont officials marked a very different outcome from the result of the Public Integrity Unit's yearslong political-corruption probe in Moreno Valley.

That investigation ended in 2015 without any county charges, although a former council member, Marcelo Co, pleaded guilty in November 2013 to a federal charge of accepting a \$2.36 million bribe from an undercover FBI agent and received a five-year prison sentence.

Hestrin described the DA's investigation then as "a totally different case, totally different set of facts."

He said Zellerbach probed the city for more than two years. Hestrin said he then took a fresh look at the case and concluded there was not enough evidence to file charges.

A Riverside County criminal grand jury also did not find enough evidence of a crime to return indictments.

Hestrin said he often receives pleas for the Public Integrity Unit to investigate allegations of corruption, but "nine times out of 10, it turns out to be nothing. Turns out to be someone's angry about a political decision. That's not a crime. Someone made a decision that's a bad decision. That's not a crime either."

But he welcomes any evidence of corruption. "Point me in the right direction and we'll look at it," he said.

Does Hestrin believe that there is more public corruption in Riverside County than in others?

"It depends on what you mean by others," he answered. "I think here's the problem: We have something here in Riverside County that other places don't have, and that is dirt – land."

Six of the Beaumont defendants are accused of personally benefiting from the issuance of bonds to pay for

public projects for a rapidly expanding city.

“We have a lot of land, a lot of development and a lot of growth,” Hestrin said. “With a lot of growth comes the potential and the temptation for corruption.”

Contact the writer: brokos@pe.com or 951-368-9569

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ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

O.C. Watchdog: Unfunded pension debt approaching \$1 trillion?

By [TERI SFORZA](#)

2016-05-21 22:34:45



So if you don't live in Irwindale, rejoice: There, even when you look at it through rose-colored glasses, public pension liabilities equal \$32,447 for each and every household in the city.

Slap on a skeptic's glasses, and that load skyrockets to \$134,907 per household.

Irwindale carries the heaviest pension load of more than 1,000 California public agencies whose data have been sliced and diced and [posted for the world to see](#) by the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research.

The heaviest loads in Orange County are in Newport Beach, Brea, Santa Ana, Anaheim and Costa Mesa, ranging from (rose glasses) \$5,435 to \$6,653 per household, or (skeptic's) \$15,976 to \$19,062.

We'll explain the glasses thing in a minute. But no surprise here: The older cities have had their own in-house police and fire departments for decades, and public safety workers usually get the most expensive pensions.

That comes clear in the incredible lightness of being a newer-fangled city, which contracts out for police and fire services (and thus doesn't carry that pension load on its books): Aliso Viejo, \$32 per household (rose) or \$126 (skeptic's); Laguna Woods, \$32 or \$121; Rancho Santa Margarita, \$72 or \$239.

Of course, that load winds up somewhere. In the County of Orange – which provides police services to contract cities via its Sheriff's Department – each of its 1 million or so households has a load equal to \$5,108 (rose) or \$14,840 (skeptic's). That's on top of whatever each household's city (and other agency) loads may be.

Stanford's [PensionTracker.org](#) launched last fall, initially listing local agencies, and last week added data for every state. California ranked seventh highest nationwide for debt-per-household when viewed through rose-colored glasses (\$15,618); and third-highest in the nation when viewed through skeptic's glasses (\$77,700).

"I was a little surprised that the unfunded amount per household is as high as it is," said Joe Nation, public policy professor at Stanford and director of the data project.

All told, California's public pension systems are \$281.5 billion short, including pension bond debt. Through Nation's lens, they're nearly \$1 trillion in the hole – or \$946.4 billion.

ROSE GLASSES

Nation, a Democrat who served in the Legislature for six years, might be considered a card-carrying progressive. He represented Marin County, where Democrats and decline-to-states constitute nearly 80 percent of registered voters. He authored bills on greenhouse gas labeling for cars, fuel efficiency standards for tires and tax incentives for alternative energy.

Nonetheless, Nation has earned the wrath of public employee unions – a traditional Democratic power base – with his jarring analyses of public pension debt.

Stanford scholars have simply been calculating how deeply in debt pension systems will be if they earn less-than-anticipated returns on investments.

The rose-colored glasses refer to [the shortfalls calculated by officials themselves](#) – what they expect if California's pension systems earn what officials say they'll earn, which is currently 7.5 percent or so. Through this "actuarial" lens, they're \$241.4 billion short. That's a staggering 38 times larger than in 2003, when the shortfall was \$6.3 billion. Nation adds in bond debt issued to beef up pension funds, arriving at his \$281.5 billion actuarial total.

Nation, and many others, don't think it's realistic to expect 7.5 percent returns on investments.

SKEPTIC'S GLASSES

A sobering study by global management consultant McKinsey & Co., titled ["Diminishing Returns: Why Investors May Need to Lower their Expectations."](#) explains why:

"Buoyed by exceptional economic and business conditions, returns on U.S. and Western European equities and bonds during the past 30 years were considerably higher than the long-run trend," says the study, released this month. "Some of these conditions are weakening or even reversing...."

"Our analysis suggests that over the next 20 years, total returns including dividends and capital appreciation could be considerably lower than they were in the past three decades. If our analysis is correct, this will have significant repercussions for both institutional and individual investors, pension funds, and governments around the world."

Total real returns for equities the past 30 years averaged 7.9 percent, McKinsey found. The next 20 years, that may well drop to 4 percent to 5 percent.

Nation, as it turns out, has been exploring that what-if-it's-less? scenario for years. His Stanford scholars have calculated the "market" hole using returns of 6.2 percent and 4.5 percent, to howls of protest from the giant California Public Employees Retirement System and others who denounced it as alarmist.

The skeptic's glasses that Nation dons in this new exercise belong, actually, to CalPERS. PensionTracker's "market" calculations assume a gut-punching 3 percent return – what CalPERS would use to calculate debt for agencies wanting to exit its system.

'COOK THE BOOKS'

While Nation has calculated "per-household" debt loads, no one is proposing to bill each individual household for pension debt. It's just a way to bring the problem down to scale for the average citizen – and one that enrages critics.

"This is another example of opponents of retirement security for teachers, firefighters, school employees and other public workers funded by special interests trying to cook the books under the guise of an academic study," said Dave Low, chair of Californians for Retirement Security, a coalition of public employee unions.

He's not necessarily buying the "past performance is no indicator of future results" warnings.

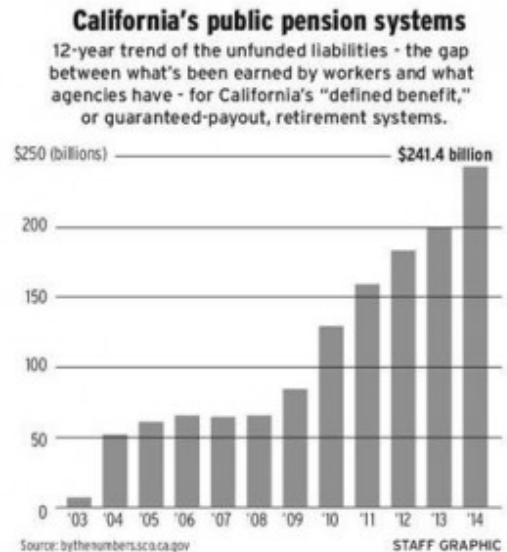
"As any financial expert will tell you, it's critical to look at the long-term results of any investment, rather than cropping the picture to serve political goals," Low said. "The fact of the matter is that CalPERS and CalSTRS have consistently met their rates of return over time. No amount of data manipulation can change that."

CalPERS doesn't think Nation's approach is helpful.

"Showing pension liabilities on a termination- or market-value basis is unrealistic when investing for the long-term, as it only accounts for the current value of liabilities in the event of a plan termination," spokeswoman Amy Morgan said in a statement.

But the pension giant is taking steps to stabilize in light of the economic conditions that the McKinsey study suggests, she said.

In November, it adopted a "funding risk mitigation policy" that will, in years of galloping investment returns,



redirect money to help pay down unfunded liability.

"CalPERS remains committed to investing for the long-term and takes a measured and balanced approach to become a fully funded pension system," she said. "Using our actuarial basis method allows for more rate stability for our employers and lessens the volatility so they can plan for the future. This method not only takes into account investment returns, but it also looks at employee life expectancy, projected retirement date and the projected compensation of the employee."

ON THE HOOK

If the hole isn't filled up with meatier investment earnings and heftier contributions from public workers and employers alike, taxpayers will have to fill it directly.

That's because unfunded pension liabilities are simply what we've promised employees for work already performed. And in California, pension promises can never be broken – at least, not outside of federal bankruptcy court.

Despite modest reforms enacted in 2013 and greater contributions to pension funds by agencies and workers alike, pension debt keeps growing. A new accounting rule requires that they be factored into balance sheets for the first time this year. Billions of equity have vanished as a result – [more than \\$3.5 billion from the County of Orange](#) alone. The [Orange County Fire Authority is officially in the red](#).

"For too long, the true cost of public employee pensions has been hidden from the public," said Chuck Reed, a Democrat and former mayor of San Jose who has been trying to launch a pension reform initiative for years.

"Use of optimistic assumptions about rates of investment returns has obscured the cost and the risk to taxpayers. By using less-optimistic assumptions, PensionTracker shows the rest of the pension debt iceberg lurking beneath the water, waiting to sink the ship of state."

Reed's partner in the initiative push, Carl DeMaio, a Republican and former member of the San Diego City Council, said they're aiming an initiative at the 2018 ballot. They want public agencies to have the freedom to negotiate smaller pension benefits for workers going forward; the benefits workers have already earned would remain untouched.

"At some point, obviously, we'll have to deal with this," Nation said. "We'll either deal with it collectively, constructively and collaboratively, or when it blows up on us."

Contact the writer: tsforza@ocregister.com

O.C. PUBLIC AGENCY PENSION DEBT, PER HOUSEHOLD

Agency	Per-household unfunded liability, based on 7.5% return (actuarial)	Per-household unfunded liability, based on 3% return (market)
Newport Beach	\$6,653	\$19,062
Brea	\$6,068	\$20,113
Santa Ana	\$5,862	\$20,684
Anaheim	\$5,611	\$18,808
Costa Mesa	\$5,435	\$15,976
County of Orange	\$5,108	\$14,840
Orange	\$4,376	\$15,078

Laguna Beach	\$4,334	\$15,814
Garden Grove	\$4,321	\$13,759
Huntington Beach	\$4,116	\$13,097
Fullerton	\$3,708	\$12,616
Fountain Valley	\$3,648	\$12,058
Buena Park	\$3,041	\$11,343
Westminster	\$2,828	\$10,486
Los Alamitos	\$2,809	\$10,866
La Habra	\$2,653	\$9,995
La Palma	\$2,591	\$10,053
Cypress	\$1,861	\$7,581
Placentia	\$1,729	\$6,216
Seal Beach	\$1,720	\$6,808
Tustin	\$1,707	\$6,418
San Clemente	\$1,037	\$3,598
Yorba Linda	\$722	\$2,146
South Coast Water District	\$698	\$2,638
Stanton	\$672	\$2,314
Villa Park	\$475	\$1,428
Mission Viejo	\$465	\$1,532
Serrano Water District	\$354	\$1,561

Laguna Beach County Water District	\$290	\$1,081
Yorba Linda Water District	\$213	\$791
Dana Point	\$210	\$800
Laguna Niguel	\$187	\$719
Laguna Hills	\$182	\$763
Mesa Water District	\$166	\$669
Lake Forest	\$134	\$524
Rancho Santa Margarita	\$72	\$239
Buena Park Library District	\$52	\$214
Laguna Woods	\$34	\$121
Aliso Viejo	\$32	\$126

SOURCE: PENSIONTRACKER.ORG, STANFORD INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC POLICY RESEARCH, PUBLIC AGENCIES

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LOCAL / L.A. Now

In troubled, tiny Maywood, mileage stipends add to council salaries



A man rides a bike along the Los Angeles River in Maywood. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

By **Ruben Vives** • Contact Reporter

MAY 19, 2016, 3:30 AM

At just over a square mile, Maywood is the second-smallest city in Los Angeles County. To traverse from one end to the other of the working-class town takes but a few minutes.

But that didn't stop municipal leaders from granting themselves, the city treasurer and the city clerk \$250 monthly mileage stipends.

If Maywood used the Internal Revenue Service's suggested reimbursement rate for business travel of 54 cents a mile, city officials would need to drive 463 miles a month to reach the \$250 mark.

Maywood has struggled with financial problems for years, and a recent state report said the town of 28,000 people southeast of downtown Los Angeles is on the edge of a financial cliff. The city has \$16 million in debts and no plans to pay them off, the state found.

Councilman Ramon Medina said he thought the reimbursement amount sounded reasonable, though he said he has attended only one board meeting since being elected in November.

“I didn’t think it was going to be a big chunk of money,” Medina said. “But other people have complained. Maybe it’s something we need to go back and visit.”

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Critics say the mileage stipend is simply an attempt to provide officials with more compensation. Council members make about \$550 a month for part-time work plus additional money for serving on other government bodies.

“It’s a pay raise, that’s all it really is” said Eduardo De La Riva, the only council member to vote against the stipend. “It doesn’t make sense. We’re not financially stable. Knowing that in the last 4 to 5 years we had been cutting back on spending, the last thing we should have been doing is finding ways to spend money.”

Jessica Levinson, a Loyola Law School professor and president of the Los Angeles City Ethics Commission, agreed that the payments come across as bumps in salary.

“I’m laughing through the tears,” Levinson said. “The city’s in this precarious financial position. This is a time to be trimming things that are absolutely unnecessary, and an automatic stipend for mileage, when you’re serving a city that is 1.2 square miles, is not a necessity.”

“It’s one more chapter in a really sad narrative in the seeming mismanagement of Maywood,” she added. “It’s unfortunate. It leads to a cycle of discontent.”

[RELATED: Why the city of Maywood is facing a state audit and a probe by the district attorney >>](#)

Maywood was on the brink of bankruptcy in 2010, when officials laid off much of the City Hall staff and dismantled its police department. It contracted policing services to the L.A. County Sheriff’s Department and had the neighboring city of Bell handle many administrative functions.

Those plans, however, were scuttled after [The Times revealed](#) huge salaries paid to top Bell officials,

which eventually led to criminal charges.

Then, last August, the California state auditor determined that Maywood had yet to recover and deemed the city a potential “high-risk entity,” launching an extensive review of the city’s finances and operations.

The review is designed to assess Maywood’s financial health and its “potential for waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement,” according to a state report.

City records show the mileage stipends were approved in December, the same month council members Medina and Sergio Calderon were sworn into office, according to city records. Also sworn in were City Clerk Gerardo Mayagoitia and City Treasurer Gloria Viramontes, who is the sister of Medina.

Maywood city records show that five of the eight committees that the council members served on — one held at City Hall, the others in surrounding cities — pay a monthly stipend of \$100 to \$200. Only one board, the L.A. County Sanitation District, pays for mileage in addition to the monthly stipend. At least three boards are voluntary.

De La Riva said he expressed concerns about the mileage allowance. He also said the payments seemed too high for the amount of driving that is required in such a tiny city.

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Even if a council member served on all the boards — and none do — the total mileage driven from City Hall to the different boards would total about 120 miles. That's about a quarter of the mileage that would be required to reach the \$250 stipend if the IRS' suggested rate for business travel was used.

Mayagoitia said he didn't particularly object to the stipend, but he didn't see how the council members needed it.

“Is it justifiable? No it isn’t,” Mayagoitia said. “They’re getting money for something they’re not doing.”

De La Riva said Medina should have recused himself when he voted for the stipends and when they restored the salary of the city treasurer — Medina's sister — which he said had been cut to \$100 from \$425 a month last September.

Medina said he did not recused himself because no one told him to, including City Atty. Mike Montgomery.

Former City Treasurer Salvador Contreras said he was surprised to learn that the city treasurer was once again receiving the higher monthly salary. He said when he was in the position, he often felt bad about getting paid so much for a job that did not require a lot of work.

Contreras said his job entailed signing checks and working with the finance director. But he said the workload was so low that he pleaded with the former city manager to give him more work.

“It not only bothered me but it bothered my family. They would even ask: ‘Why are you getting all this money?’ and I would say I was trying to do extra things so that I can feel better about the pay,” Contreras said. “It was somewhat uncomfortable.”

He said a monthly \$250 stipend for mileage was simply unnecessary in Maywood.

“I wouldn’t get paid to go to my house to City Hall when it’s less than a mile away,” he said. “This was way out of line.”

Councilman Ricardo Villarreal said he didn’t think twice about voting in favor of the monthly stipends because he thought the roughly \$550 a month they get for serving as council members didn’t cover other costs like meals with other officials and mileage.

“I thought it was fair,” he said.

Council members Thomas Martin and Sergio Calderon did not respond to requests for comment for the story.

Critics also took issue with the council voting to pay planning commissioners \$65 a month. For years, it was an unpaid position. Cindy Lara, a planning commissioner, said even she was surprised when she learned she would get paid because the commission rarely meets.

“This is where I live and this is where I’m raising my son, where I’m raising my family. I grew up here, so it’s not bad to not get paid,” Lara said. “Why can’t they use that money to pay someone else — like code enforcement?”

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Opinion / Editorial

Editorial Family members of politicians shouldn't get to cash in on their connections



Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe has regularly voted on contracts that benefit paying clients of his son, lobbyist Matt Knabe. (Los Angeles Times)

By **The Times Editorial Board**

MAY 24, 2016, 5:00 AM

Elected officials in California control billions of taxpayer dollars. Their job is to spend that money wisely, on behalf of the people who elected them -- not to redirect it to themselves, their own families or loved ones.

That's why California [law](#) prohibits state and local elected officials from “self-dealing” -- voting on matters that would offer financial benefits to members of their households, including their minor children and spouses. For example, if a city councilwoman's husband were a graphic designer bidding for a lucrative contract to redesign the city's logo, she would not be allowed to vote on the contract.

Yet there's no law that stops lawmakers from voting to benefit other close family members. If the councilwoman's beloved son (out of work since graduating from college, poor guy) were competing for

the logo contract, she could vote to give it to him. Or her brother. Or her parents.

That doesn't just feel wrong, it is wrong. In most families, the financial interdependency of parents and their children never completely ends. And though siblings might not be as financially intertwined, there's bound to be a natural (and understandable) bias toward loved ones.

This is not just a hypothetical problem. There are number of cases in which local elected officials have voted in ways that benefited close family members. Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe, for example, [has regularly voted on contracts that benefit paying clients of his son](#), lobbyist Matt Knabe. And just recently in tiny, financially troubled Maywood, [one councilman voted to raise his sister's pay](#) (she is the city's treasurer) by more than 300%.

Maybe these were justifiable decisions and had nothing to do with family ties. But how can the public be sure? Better to remove the potential for conflict altogether. [SB 1011](#) by Sen. [Tony Mendoza](#) (D-Artesia) would do that by extending the family interest prohibitions to siblings, parents, adult children and in-laws.

This bill stalled last year after legitimate concerns were raised that legislators might unknowingly vote on an item that involved a family member. It could happen (for instance, if the family member were estranged), and the penalties would be severe – including being banned from holding public office for life. Mendoza revised the current bill to say that a public official must know about the conflict for it to be a violation.

This is a reasonable bill and legislators should prove that, while they may love their families, they won't put their relatives' interests before the public's trust.

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LOCAL / L.A. Now

Racial slurs, anti-gay epithets, the N-word and F-bombs: Why L.A. political discourse is plummeting



Los Angeles City Council President Herb Wesson addresses a news conference about a speaker card allegedly submitted on May 11 by Wayne Spindler. The card depicted a burning cross, a body dangling from a tree and an apparent Ku Klux Klan figure holding a sign labeling Wesson with a racially charged epithet. (Irfan Khan / Los Angeles Times)

By **Matt Hamilton, Emily Alpert Reyes and David Zahniser**

MAY 19, 2016, 3:59 PM

Racial slurs. Anti-gay epithets. The N-word. The F-bomb.

Over the last three years, the language used by members of the public at [Los Angeles City Council](#) meetings has grown increasingly graphic, moving from the vulgar and the sexually explicit into the hateful and, some say, frightening.

But worries over those messages crossed a new threshold in recent days, after Los Angeles City Council President [Herb Wesson](#) received a public comment card featuring a racial epithet and a drawing of a

burning cross. The card, submitted by Encino attorney Wayne Spindler, also featured a drawing of a figure resembling a Ku Klux Klansman and a man hanging from a tree.

Spindler was arrested May 13 and booked on a felony count of making a criminal threat. Now, some council members said they are looking for new ways of reining in what they describe as hateful and offensive language during public meetings.

“Over the last 2 1/2 years that I’ve been here, it’s escalated,” said Councilwoman [Nury Martinez](#), who represents the San Fernando Valley. “And it’s gotten scarier and scarier to come to work.”

Wesson, the council’s first black president, made clear he views the comment card as a potential threat to his family, the city’s workforce and visitors to City Hall.

For Wesson, the comment card rekindled memories of stories told by his grandparents, who lived in Arkansas and Georgia, about “liquored-up Klansmen running through the South terrorizing black people, about crosses actually being burned on the lawns of their friends.”

“It is not OK to do that to me,” he said at a City Hall news conference. “It is not OK to do that to us in the year 2016. And when I’m talking about us, I’m talking about all of us -- white, yellow, black and brown.”

Spindler, in turn, denied that he had made a threat and instead accused Wesson and his colleagues of “trying to chill free speech.” In an interview, the Encino resident compared his work to Charlie Hebdo, the controversial French cartoon publication. He also said he is “absolutely” not a KKK member.

The burning cross on the card, Spindler said, was meant to show that City Hall is “burning down with corruption.” The drawing of the person hanging from a tree is a reference to rate increases recently approved by the Department of Water and Power, he said.

“We’re getting lynched with a 20% rate hike” Spindler added.

Prosecutors are evaluating whether to file charges against Spindler, said Jane Robison, spokeswoman for the L.A. County district attorney's office.

Council members say Spindler, who sometimes refers to himself as “Wayne from Encino,” has a long history of outrageous behavior. He has repeatedly worn a Ku Klux Klan hood with a swastika on it. From the audience, he has offered council members a Nazi salute.

Another frequent public speaker routinely uses a slur against Mexican immigrants when appearing before the council. A third called council members a derogatory word for gay men during an

appearance last month.

Yet even as they decried the use of inflammatory language, council members acknowledged they have a limited ability to control what is said during public meetings. Federal courts have ruled that public speakers can be ejected if they become so disruptive that they impair the council's ability to run the meeting. They cannot, however, be removed simply for uttering curse words or hateful invective.

That was the [message in 2013 from a federal judge](#), siding with City Hall critics who had been ejected from meetings after using the F-word during public comment. U.S. District Judge Dean D. Pregerson said that under the 1st Amendment, council members must be willing to tolerate obscene language and personal attacks.

"In one of the largest cities in the world, it is to be expected that some inhabitants will sometimes use language that does not conform to conventions of civility and decorum, including offensive language and swear words," Pregerson wrote.

A year later, the city paid \$215,000 [to settle a case](#) filed by a Venice resident who sued after being ejected from a city commission meeting. The man, who is black, had worn a Ku Klux Klan hood and a T-shirt featuring a racial slur against African Americans.

When that case was finalized, the use of incendiary language by the public "took a dramatic turn for the worse," said Councilman [Paul Krekorian](#).

Krekorian said he believes there are additional steps the city can take to limit disruptive behavior during council meetings. He declined to spell out what those steps could be.

"When someone ... makes racist threats, makes foul, sexist comments, makes homophobic, pornographic comments from our microphone, children in Los Angeles are seeing that across our city," he said.

"People are feeling victimized by that across our city. People are feeling threatened by those comments across our city."

But Stephen Rohde, who represented the City Hall critics in both lawsuits, argued that it would be a mistake for council members to approve new "speech restrictions" and then try to defend them in court.

"This is the rough and tumble of democracy," he said. "And these City Council persons need to respect the constitution, respect the court rulings, take this stuff in stride and focus on the merits of whatever issues are being debated."

Spindler submitted his speaker card at the May 11 meeting of the Rules, Elections, Intergovernmental Relations and Neighborhoods Committee. Wesson is chairman of the committee.

The card was scanned by the City Clerk's office and published online with other public comment cards from the meeting. In blue marker, the card appears to depict a Ku Klux Klan figure holding a sign that states, "Herb = [N-word]." The image of a body dangling from a tree by a noose is evocative of the lynching of blacks in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Rohde, the civil liberties attorney, contends that Spindler's drawing "is squarely in the category of protected speech" and does not constitute a threat to public safety.

Anne-Marie Johnson, who serves on the Silver Lake Neighborhood Council, disagreed with that interpretation, saying the card is definitely a threat. And she argued that council members had done too little to rein in offensive speech.

Johnson, who is African American, said legal worries were "a lame excuse" for allowing such speech to continue on the council floor. "I'm a little tired of the city being afraid to take things to court because they've lost," she added. "Maybe they need better attorneys."

Martinez said she too wants the city to push back. Such language was not tolerated, Martinez said, during her time on the Los Angeles school board and the San Fernando City Council.

At City Hall, people who use slurs and inflammatory language have been reassured by federal judges that "they can continue to behave this way," she said.

"We always seem to sort up throw our hands up in the air and give up," Martinez added. "Now you've seen the results."

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Times staff writers Kate Mather and Abby Sewell contributed to this report.

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